

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 IO-13 ACDA-12 SSM-03 OMB-01
TRSE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07 L-03
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06
/098 W

-----048841 011703Z /41

R 011514Z NOV 77
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9031
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, IS
SUBJECT: SHINUI'S UNEASY PLACE IN THE DMC

REF: TEL AVIV 8202, 8295

1. SUMMARY: OPPOSITION TO THE DMC'S JOINING THE LIKUD GOVERNMENT WAS LED BY ITS SHINUI FACTION, A DOVEISH PROTEST GROUP THAT HAD MERGED WITH THE DMC EARLY THIS YEAR. ALTHOUGH SHINUI HAS DECIDED TO REMAIN IN THE PARTY FOR THE PRESENT, IT COULD STILL BOLT ON A SETTLEMENTS OR GENEVA PEACE ISSUE. SUCH A DEFECTION WOULD HURT THE DMC, BUT DO LITTLE HARM TO THE COALITION'S HEFTY KNESSET MAJORITY AND BE A SHOT IN THE ARM TO A MUCH DEPLETED OPPOSITION. END SUMMARY.

2. THE DMC'S ENTRY INTO THE GOVERNMENT FOLLOWING A SUMMER
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OF OFF-AGAIN ON-AGAIN NEGOTIATIONS CAME AMIDST CONSIDERABLE SOUL-SEARCHING AMONG THE PARTY'S ACTIVISTS AND LEFT NO LITTLE DISAFFECTION WITHIN THEIR RANKS. THE VOTE IN THE 135-MEMBER DMC COUNCIL ON OCTOBER 20 TO APPROVE JOINING (68 TO 45) WAS UNEXPECTEDLY CLOSE. HARD-CORE OPPOSITION TO JOINING THE COALITION CENTERED AMONG ADHERENTS OF THE FORMER SHINUI MOVEMENT. HOWEVER, THE RELATIVELY

LARGE NAY VOTE REFLECTED THE FACT THAT SHINUI PEOPLE WERE NOT ALONE IN THE PARTY IN THEIR SKEPTICISM TOWARD THE REASONING AND RECOMMENDATION OF DMC LEADER YADIN ET AL, WHO DECLARED THAT A SUDDEN CHANGE IN THE SITUATION NOW REQUIRED JOINING THE GOVERNMENT UNDER TERMS WHICH HAD PREVIOUSLY

BEEN REJECTED.

3. OPPOSITION TO JOINING WAS LED BY MK AMNON RUBENSTEIN, NUMBER TWO MAN IN THE PARTY, AND FOUNDER AND HEAD OF SHINUI UNTIL ITS MERGER WITH THE DMC AT THE BEGINNING OF THIS YEAR ("SHINUI," MEANING CHANGE/ WAS INCORPORATED IN THE NAME OF THE PARTY). FOLLOWING THE COUNCIL'S VOTE TO JOIN, RUBENSTEIN CALLED A MEETING OF OPPONENTS OF THE DECISION ON OCTOBER 22. OVER FORTY ACTIVISTS ATTENDED, INCLUDING NEARLY ALL WHO VOTED AGAINST JOINING. YADIN, WHO CAME TO DEFEND THE REVERSAL OF HIS EARLIER RECOMMENDATION TO STAY OUT OF THE COALITION, WAS ALSO PRESENT. DESPITE SOME SHARP TALK ABOUT BOLTING, IT WAS DECIDED TO REMAIN IN THE PARTY -- "FOR THE TIME BEING". MEANWHILE, RUBENSTEIN RESIGNED FROM THE THREE-MEMBER PARTY EXECUTIVE WHOSE OTHER TWO MEMBERS ARE YADIN AND MEIR AMIT. RUBENSTEIN HAD BEEN SAYING FOR SOME TIME PREVIOUS THAT HIS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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OPPOSITION TO ENTERING THE GOVERNMENT DID NOT EXTEND TO LEAVING THE PARTY IN THE EVENT HE WAS OVER-RULED IN THE COUNCIL, HOWEVER, RUBENSTEIN'S WIFE RESIGNED FROM THE PARTY AND PORTIONS OF HER LETTER TO YADIN EXPLAINING HER DEFECTION APPEARED IN THE PRESS.

4. WITH RUBENSTEIN OUT AND YADIN AND AMIT IN THE CABINET THE PARTY WILL SOON ELECT A NEW EXECUTIVE. RUBENSTEIN'S RESIGNATION IS VIEWED AS AN EMOTIONAL RESPONSE AND A TACTICAL ERROR. HAD HE REMAINED, HE WOULD HAVE BEEN THE SOLE HOLDOVER IN THE NEW EXECUTIVE AND HIS STANDING IN THE PARTY MIGHT HAVE ASSURED HIM A PRE-EMINENT PLACE IN THE PARTY MACHINERY'S TRIUMVIRATE.

5. SHINUI WAS THE ONLY ONE OF THE MANY PROTEST MOVEMENTS THAT EMERGED IN THE WAKE OF THE YOM KIPPUR WAR TO SURVIVE THE WAR'S IMMEDIATE AFTERMATH. BEYOND ITS COMMITMENT TO REFORM, THE MOVEMENT WAS STRONGLY DOVEISH. HOWEVER, UNTIL JOINING THE DMC EN MASSE IT REFRAINED FROM FORMALLY DECLARING ITSELF A POLITICAL PARTY. SHINUI WAS FUNDAMENTALLY AN ELITE GROUP OF INTELLECTUALS AND INCONOCLASTS; ITS

MEMBERS SEEMED UNCOMFORTABLE IN THE ROLE OF POLITICAL CAMPAIGNERS.
THEY TENDED TO RESIST THE GIVE AND TAKE OF POLITICAL COM-
PROMISE AND THE WATERING-DOWN OF PRINCIPLE THAT INEVITABLY
FOLLOWED SHINUI'S PARTICIPATION IN THE MASS MOVEMENT THAT
WAS THE GOAL AND ACHIEVEMENT OF THE DMC.

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6. SHINUI PEOPLE WERE DISMAYED AT THE LIKUD VICTORY IN
THE MAY ELECTION AND WERE PARTICULARLY CHAGRINED THAT THEIR
OWN PARTY'S RELATIVE SUCCESS HAD, BY CUTTING INTO THE RANKS
OF ALIGNMENT'S VOTERS, HELPED MAKE IT POSSIBLE. LIKE MOST
OF THE DMC LEADERSHIP, SHINUI PEOPLE EXPECTED THEIR PARTY
TO DRAW SOME VOTES FROM THE LIKUD, AND MUCH MORE FROM THE
ALIGNMENT. THE LATTER WAS EXPECTED TO BE THE CERTAIN
WINNER, BUT BY A NARROW MARGIN THAT WOULD MAKE THE DMC'S
PARTICIPATION INDISPENSABLE TO FORMING A GOVERNING COALI-
TION.

7. FROM THE BEGINNING, WHEN LIKUD-DMC
COALITION TALKS FIRST OPENED, THE SHINUI FACTION WAS AD-
VERSE TO PARTNERSHIP WITH THE LIKUD. SOME TIME AGO
RUBENSTEIN MADE IT CLEAR HE WOULD NOT SERVE IN THIS GOVERN-
MENT, ALTHOUGH HE WOULD HAVE RECEIVED HIS PARTY'S NOMINA-
TION FOR A PORTFOLIO HAD HE WISHED. WHILE WILLING TO

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ACCEPT A DMC FOREIGN POLICY PLATFORM THAT WAS A BIT TOO HAWKISH FOR THEIR TASTES, SERVING IN A BEGIN GOVERNMENT WAS INCOMPATIBLE WITH WHAT THE SHINUI MOVEMENT HAD STOOD FOR. IN THE OCTOBER 20 COUNCIL VOTE ON WHETHER TO JOIN, SHINUI PEOPLE WERE A COHESIVE CORE OF OPPOSITION.

8. FORMER SHINUI MEMBERS FORM ONLY A SMALL FACTION IN THE DMC. JUST THREE OF THE DMC'S 15 MKS WERE SHINUI MEMBERS: RUBENSTEIN, STEF WERTHEIMER AND MORDECHAI WIRSHUBSKI. (SHMUEL TOLEDANO ALSO OFTEN SUPPORTS SHINUI POSITIONS.) YET THEY ARE A COMMITTED AND DEDICATED MINORITY. ALTHOUGH AS A FACTION THEY ARE DISGRUNTLED AND FRUSTRATED WITH THE PARTY'S DECISION TO ENTER THE GOVERNMENT, PARADOXICALLY THEY ARE BELIEVED TO HAVE RECENTLY GAINED IN RELATIVE STRENGTH WITHIN THE PARTY AS THE RANKS OF THE DMC HAVE BECOME DEPLETED. MANY WHO VOTED FOR THE DMC BECAME DISENCHANTED WITH ITS UNIMPRESSIVE ROLE IN THE OPPOSITION -- A TREND WHICH MAY NOW HAVE STOPPED WITH THE DMC'S ENTRY INTO THE COALITION.

9. IN ANY EVENT, WERE THE SHINUI TO BOLT IT WOULD BE A SERIOUS LOSS TO THE DMC AND MOST LIKELY PRESAGE A RIGHTWARD SHIFT IN THE PARTY'S COLORATION. SUCH A MOVE WOULD DO MINIMAL DAMAGE TO THE COALITION AND MIGHT EVEN BE WELCOMED BY THE LIKUD AND THE RELIGIOUS PARTIES. IT WOULD, HOWEVER, GIVE THE OPPOSITION A PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SUBSTANTIVE BOOST. FOR THE MOMENT SHINUI IS BIDDING ITS TIME, BELIEVING THAT OUTSIDE THE PARTY ITS INFLUENCE ON EVENTS MAY WELL BE LESS THAN WITHIN IT. HOWEVER, ITS DECISION TO REMAIN WILL BE CONSTANTLY UNDER REVIEW AND IT WILL BE A FACTOR (THOUGH FAR FROM A COMPELLING ONE) THAT YADIN AND THE REST OF THE DMC LEADERSHIP WILL WEIGH IN FORMULATING THEIR POSITIONS IN THE CABINET. A TEST OF

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SHINUI'S INTENTIONS IS LIKELY TO OCCUR AT ANY TIME, PROBABLY OVER SETTLEMENTS POLICY ON THE WEST BANK OR AN ISSUE RELATED TO THE GENEVA PROCESS. IN THE MEANTIME WE CAN EXPECT A CONCERTED FLIRTATION CAMPAIGN FROM THE ALIGNMENT (AND SHEL) TO WEAN SHINUI AWAY FROM ITS ROCKY MARRIAGE TO YADIN'S PARTY.

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Message Attributes

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Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
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